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RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIK RUEHKUK RUEHMOS RUEHYG  
DE RUEHBUL #1844/01 1151201  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 251201Z APR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9787  
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3084  
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 5640  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4815  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4723  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0205  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3290  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC  
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 001844

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: NEIGHBORS PLEDGE SUPPORT FOR CN COOPERATION AT  
REGIONAL CONFERENCE

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¶1. Summary: The Acting Afghan Minister of Counternarcotics held a Conference April 13 on regional counternarcotics (CN) cooperation attended by Iran, China, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan did not participate. Political statements from regional ambassadors focused on the importance of increasing communication between anti-narcotics agencies, the evils of the drug trade and the need to strengthen border control. Proposals made by alternative livelihood experts included: placing CN liaison officers in each foreign embassy in Afghanistan and Afghan CN liaison officers in their embassies in neighboring countries, holding regular expert level side meetings and establishing an official information exchange program. The law enforcement experts proposed: preventing the trafficking of precursor chemicals, sharing of law enforcement data and intelligence, the signing of MOUs on extradition between regional countries and the funding of drug testing labs by donors. China and Iran were the only countries to send experts on alternative livelihoods and law enforcement, as well as their ambassadors. This meeting was in preparation for a larger CN conference to be held in May. End Summary.

¶2. The April 13 Conference on Counternarcotics Cooperation was attended by Ambassadors and experts from Pakistan, China and the Central Asian Republics. Political statements were made supporting closer cooperation on CN issues, support for Afghanistan and greater border control. Afternoon expert sessions were held on alternative livelihoods and law enforcement. A larger conference on CN will be held by the Afghan Ministry of Counternarcotics in early May.

Iran  
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¶3. Iranian Ambassador Raza Bahrami, the first envoy to speak, expressed his country's strong support for greater regional cooperation on CN issues, including the efforts made by the GOA, the UN and the UK. He argued that Afghanistan already is a narco-economy, which poses an extreme threat to the GOA's stability. He noted that most neighboring countries were now narcotics consuming as well as transit countries. Bahrami advised them to focus on practical, implementable programs over the long term that focus on eliminating

cultivation and developing the legal economy in the region. His concrete recommendations were: developing markets for Afghan products, funding the establishment of industries that require Afghan raw materials, micro finance credits, aggressive eradication and better border control.

#### Pakistan -----

¶4. Pakistan Ambassador Tariq Azizuddin focused on Pakistan's problems with the drug trade and CN efforts. The GOP has created a special CN police force, passed a new money laundering law and established six new courts for drug offenses. He argued for placing equal emphasis on demand reduction as is currently given to eradication and trafficking. He noted that strong cooperation on CN was important to Pakistan, with its 6 million addicts.

#### China -----

¶5. Chinese Ambassador Liu Jian said China strongly supported greater regional cooperation against drugs, the greatest threat to Afghanistan's stability. He suggested establishing a regular regional liaison channel, and regular bilateral meetings to continue working on CN issues. Jian noted that China trained Afghan police in 2005 and in 2006, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security will be donating equipment to the Afghan police services. In the future, the GOC will offer additional assistance with law enforcement, information exchange and experience sharing.

#### Central Asian Republics -----

¶6. Tajikistan contributed the most to the CN discussion among  
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the Central Asian Republics. Ambassador Farhad Mahkamov said that Tajikistan was active in CN efforts, and would continue to arrest traffickers in collaboration with neighboring countries. He thanked the U.S. for its assistance in establishing the Tajik CN agency. Mahkamov recommended greater assistance from the international community to create a secure monitoring belt along borders. He also suggested greater efforts to fight the trafficking of precursor chemicals.

¶7. Turkmen Ambassador Aman Yaranov admitted to some drug trafficking through Turkmenistan. He argued that CN cooperation required a collective approach beyond Afghanistan and its neighbors to be successful.

¶8. No representatives from Uzbekistan attended the conference.

#### Government of Afghanistan -----

¶9. CN Minister Qaderi argued that concrete means of cooperation needed to be worked out to achieve success. Deputy Foreign Minister Saikal said that the current level of communication among countries in the region had not been sufficient for successful CN networking and border control. He noted the MFA's creation of a new working group for regional cooperation that could assist in CN cooperation. Deputy Minister of Interior Daud mentioned President Karzai's declaration of a jihad against narcotics, and asked for additional help in police training to combat trafficking, end the precursor chemical trade and improve information exchange.

#### Proposals from Expert Panels -----

¶10. The alternative livelihoods expert group proposed:

exploring joint alternative livelihood centers with neighboring countries; supporting joint residential experts, one in each embassy; regular expert side meetings rotating between countries; exchanges, secondments and study tours focused on alternative livelihoods; and developing official information exchange programs on alternative livelihoods.

¶11. The law enforcement expert group supported: a call on chemical producing countries to follow the 1988 UN resolution on CN to prevent the trafficking of chemical precursors; ask neighboring countries to increase law enforcement against precursors and ask the international community for funds to improve capacity in the border police corps; increase intelligence sharing among Afghanistan and neighboring countries and exchange reports on narcotics seizures; place CN liaison officers in regional embassies; establish MOUs for extradition and criminal information exchange; and establish drug testing labs funded by the donors and the international community.

Comment

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¶12. The GOA,s preliminary conference on regional CN cooperation was a qualified success in-so-far as all neighboring countries except Uzbekistan attended and agreed on steps that needed to be taken. The paucity of substantive dialogue was offset by expressions of support for regional cooperation. Increased information exchange and placement of CN liaison officers in regional embassies could boost CN interdiction and success, but it remains to be seen whether Afghanistan and its neighbors will follow through. Post will follow up and encourage participants to take concrete actions prior to a larger regional CN conference in early May. If we can obtain solid commitments from regional players, donor funding of these proposals could be money well spent.

¶13. Iran and China may be the neighboring countries most likely to work for greater regional CN cooperation, considering their strong expressions of support and the fact they sent experts for both panels. Tajikistan also seems

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committed to CN cooperation, and has made considerable CN efforts, but unlike Iran and China, is resource poor and requires significant donor assistance. Uzbekistan,s absence, mirrored in several recent regional conferences, could prevent successful regional cooperation in the long run.  
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